



## MATTERS OF OPINION



**Terry Steinwand**  
*Director*

We're almost into full summer mode. Our children are out of school, vacations are being planned, and fishing is in full swing – another great season in North Dakota.

Fishing is a premier activity during the summer season, and we're still a few months away from major hunting seasons. But the Game and Fish Department is responsible for more than just those species of fish and wildlife that we harvest. These animals are designated as nongame species, but they do have a connection to those species for which we hunt and fish.

In 2001, Congress approved legislation authorizing federal dollars for states to use in developing fish and wildlife conservation and restoration programs for nongame species. Initially called the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, it is now called State Wildlife Grants, or SWG. While the SWG program promotes a comprehensive approach to conservation of all species, funding is intended to benefit species of greatest conservation need.

The important part of this program is that while the focus is on those species we don't hunt, fish or trap, it benefits all wildlife. We're excited about this ambitious endeavor in taking a more proactive approach in keeping species from becoming threatened or endangered. It will move us toward the goal of preserving an important part of our state's heritage for future generations.

Game and Fish Department fisheries crews are done collecting eggs by now, but the work is far from over. The eggs must be hatched, and then distributed as fingerlings to lakes across the state where they'll provide fishing opportunities to anglers down the road.

I want to thank the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's fish hatchery system for the wonderful job they do for us in fish production. North Dakota is the only state in the nation without a state fish hatchery. This is so because we have developed an agreement with the federal hatchery system to provide fingerlings from the eggs we collect from a variety of species. This cooperative agreement has worked exceptionally well and both agencies have benefited. North Dakota has the most cost-effective fish production program because of it. As a result, we can do more with less. While fish stocking isn't a panacea for fish management, it can be an important tool.

While we intentionally stock fish across the state, some introductions occur unintentionally. Whether purposeful or not, some of these can have dire consequences. The unintentional, in the form of aquatic nuisance species, can negatively influence our fisheries for years. This is why we've emphasized dealing with exotic plants and animals the last few years.

I ask each of you who visit or use waters in the state to take the time to familiarize yourself with our ANS guidelines. By doing so, you can do your part in preventing ANS from entering North Dakota.

As always, there are a number of outdoor opportunities in North Dakota. I urge everyone to take advantage of them – be it a simple walk on the prairie, or taking your kids fishing, or boating on a favorite water. Be safe and enjoy the great outdoors.

*Terry Steinwand*